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15 August 1967

IRAG Meeting Notes - Number 2

1. The second meeting of the Information Requirements Advisory Group (IRAG), chaired by Proctor (A/DDI), was held on 11 August 1967.

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2. The "talking paper" on validation procedures and problems, requested of the IRS member at the last meeting, had been distributed prior to the meeting. The Chairman requested member reactions to the procedures proposed in the paper, asking that views concerning office application of the procedures be confined to requirements for collection --the matter of exploitation requirements would be taken up later.

3. Member comments on the proposed validation procedures reflected varied outlooks due to wide differences in the functional activities (e.g., current versus basic) and substantive concerns of the production components. Most believed that uniform application of the letter of the procedures was not feasible in all instances and that practices would have to vary in accordance with the priorities of information needs and with the sources of collection systems to which the requirements apply. For example, requirements for high cost/risk sources, particularly those necessitating judgments of trade-offs between priority targets, could require validation well above the division chief level, whereas a short amplifying query to a human source might not require division chief attention. The Chairman agreed that the level and intensity of review and validation may fluctuate in direct proportion to the importance of the subject and the cost/risk of collection. Nevertheless, regardless of the level at which the validation process culminates, agreed procedures will help ensure orderly review at each level. Such review is essential if we aim to take into account the cumulative impact of many seemingly insignificant requirements on collector efforts and resources and to eliminate those requirements for "nice-to-know-but-not-important" information.

4. A question was raised as to the ability of the division chief to judge the impact of his requirements on collectors in the absence of information on their capabilities and resources. The "talking paper" appears to assume a knowledge of all collection systems on the part of all division chiefs and this assumption may or may not be valid.

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- 2 -

It was suggested that the division chiefs could acquire needed collection system knowledge from their analysts on the basis of their exploratory contacts, from IRS, from the office directors, or directly from collection system managers. It was recognized that questions concerning overall relative orders of priority of broad substantive topics and the problem of general competition for collector resources are difficult to resolve at the division level; nevertheless, the division chief should at least examine statements of the analysts' needs against certain criteria such as: "Is this an important thing to work on? How much do we need the information? Can library research rather than collection produce the information?" Attention to these criteria alone at the division level might result in cutting-off the "bottom" 10-20% of some analysts' requirements.

5. It was the consensus that the proposed office level review would be useful in that it would add perspective to the requirements review process. It was suggested that each office review be scheduled on a staggered time table so that IRS could assist each office director in his efforts to purge further his office requirements portfolio.

6. Question was voiced as to the types of requirements (e.g., tasking, R&D requirements) to be included in the proposed procedures and clearer definition of these types was suggested. Also questioned was the need to adhere to the procedures in cases where the requirements flow remains within a single directorate, i.e., where a production component originates a requirement for levy on a collector in the same directorate. On this latter point both the A/DDI and A/DDS&T agreed that tasking and use by any Agency production component of any operating collection system should become part of the formal record and that a complete formal record of all requests for information is essential to executive management of collection, processing and production resources. However, this does not preclude free access to the collector before, during or after the fact. Other comments included suggestions for "pricing" requirements and fixing a chain of approval authorities scaled to the price; eliminating all existing requirements from the books and starting over; and establishing separate mechanisms for concentration on the high and the low priority requirements.

7. In general, the group believed the proposed procedures to be workable. However, in light of some of the questions raised it was agreed that further discussion was required before deciding on an agreed procedure. The Chairman suggested a trial exercise in which a selected division chief would subject all of his requirements to a critical revalidation review, purging those considered to be marginal. The

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- 3 -

Deputy Director, OER, volunteered the Communist Division for such a trial. Following the Division Chief review the Deputy Director, OER, will conduct an office level review of the Division's requirements with view to further purging. IRS will assist [redacted] [redacted] as required. Following completion of the trial exercise, the OER and IRS members of IRAG will report the benefits of their experiences to the Group.

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8. The Chairman announced that the next meeting of IRAG will be called in about three weeks at which time discussion of the validation procedures will continue.

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